

## **St. Basil's Church, Chaparmukh**

St. Basil's Catholic Church, Chaparmukh was established in the year 2003 to cater to the educational, social, and medical needs of the people of Chaparmukh and its adjoining areas. The first priest in-charge, Fr. Enock Rajan began his mission staying in a rented house near the railway station and searched for a suitable plot of land for the mission and school. At that time, the centre had already begun an English medium school with few children in another rented house. The area being dominated by staunch Hindus, Fr. Enock had to face opposition from many villagers who feared that the missionaries would force the students to eat cow meat and convert them to Christianity. Moreover, there was a campaign against selling land to start the mission and school. Finally, in 2005 an Assamese gentleman, Sri Prafulla Sarmah agreed to sell his paddy field, measuring 21 bighas to the mission. The land was purchased and earth filling was done.

The foundation stone for the school, St Basil's Academy was laid in February 2005. The students find it easy to reach the school as it is situated close to the national highway and just a kilometre away from Chaparmukh railway station. Presently, the school has a well-constructed, concrete building. It has seven hundred students with thirty teaching and non-teaching staff from varied religious groups: Hindu, Christian, Muslim and Sikh. The school caters to students from the communities of Assamese, Bengali, Tiwa, Rabha, Garo, Adibasi, Santal, Rajbanshi, Karbi, Dimasa. Its hostel facilities help the children from far-flung villages to have access to education.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth joined the mission on 23 July 2008. They manage the hostel for girls and undertake different activities of the mission.

The social service sector of the Church under the aegis of Gana Seva society, the Social Service wing of the Archdiocese, had been working on the areas of health and hygiene, non formal education, self-help and awareness programmes, relief and rehabilitation programmes, and women empowerment programmes. Hence, the Church has adopted seven villages to organize these programs for the villagers. Self Help Groups are formed and skill development programmes are conducted in the villages.

Medical and eye testing camps are conducted in the School campus which benefits hundreds of villagers who have no other means for proper health care. Every year, during the flood season, relief materials are supplied to the flood victims.

The presence of the Church at Chaparmukh during the past one decade and more has helped to bring in changes in the lives of people. The people have become more aware of the importance of education, health care, networking, bank savings, skill development, and other developmental activities.

The Church feels happy and grateful for having been able to help its flock. It places on record the services it rendered to humanity irrespective of caste, colour and creed. It has been receiving the support and cooperation of the people and leaders of the civil society.

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